

ICHANG: The Gateway to Western China

*Being a Brief Study of a Typical Frontier
Station in the District of Hankow. With
some account of the work that is being done
and the work that should be done. . . .*

BY THE REV. D. TRUMBULL HUNTINGTON

ICHANG is the most westerly station in the District of Hankow. The clergy in charge are the Rev. D. T. Huntington, who succeeded Dr. Collins in 1901, and the Rev. T. F. Tsen, Chinese priest.

Last year 729 public services were held. The number of baptized Church members is 156, and the number of communicants 74.

Copies of this leaflet may be obtained from the Corresponding Secretary, 281 Fourth Avenue, New York, asking for Leaflet No. 219.

FIRST EDITION, MARCH 10TH, 1902.



THE MISSION HOUSE AT ICHANG

Ichang: The Gateway to Western China

BY THE REVEREND D. TRUMBULL HUNTINGTON*

ICHANG, on the Yang-tse River one thousand miles west of Shanghai and four hundred miles west of Hankow, is one of the most beautifully situated cities in the world. Five miles to the north the Yang-tse emerges from the last of the gorges. It bends sharply to the southwest as it leaves the gorge, then turns again to the southeast opposite the city and rolls away through lower mountains to the great plain. To the west and south and north rise wild, picturesque mountains, some over five thousand feet high.

The city itself is no more beautiful than most Chinese cities; it has, however, some peculiar features of its own. The streets are rather broader than those of Hankow, donkeys and little horses are more common, and wheelbarrows are almost unknown, for it would be impossible to push them over the mountain paths that serve for roads. The carrying-pole, with its load suspended from each end, is the commonest means of transportation, but coolies from the more mountainous districts are also seen with

pack-baskets on their backs similar to those used in Maine and the Adirondacks. Most of the houses here are washed dark gray instead of the white which is usual elsewhere.

The chief importance of Ichang from a commercial point of view is that it is the gate to the rich province of Szechuan. The city itself has only sixty or seventy thousand inhabitants and the surrounding country is not rich. For two hundred miles above us the Yang-tse passes through a series of mountain ranges—a wild and not very populous country. Then come the fertile valleys of Szechuan and, five hundred miles away, the open port of Chung-king. So far, this section of the river has proved impracticable for merchant steamers, though several gunboats—British, French and Japanese—are now patrolling Szechuan waters. All goods going to Szechuan must, therefore, be transhipped here, and the rest of the journey must be made by native junks, and even then it is attended with considerable risk.

Our mission compound is situated out-

* See note at the end of the article.

side the South Gate, where are all the foreign houses, except that of the Swedish Mission. The chapel and schools are about three-quarters of a mile away, inside the city. Passing out of the compound, you leave a bad looking, bad smelling duck pond on the left and go first between some old, tumble-down mud houses, and then between some good new houses. Then you turn to the left and pass a sacred tree, which is worshipped by many and hung with votive offerings. Some are round pieces of wood with one word "Divine" painted on them. Others are oblong, inscribed with the words "Prayer will certainly be answered," or other pious saying. We go through an alley, in which all the houses but two are opium dens, to the South Gate, Main Street. This is the liveliest street in the city—or rather out of it. It is usually crowded with coolies and



"THE LIVELIEST STREET IN THE CITY"



THE SACRED TREE AT ICHANG

*Worshipped with prayer and incense by the Chinese
as a tree inhabited by a divinity*

merchants and women and children and beggars—but chiefly coolies. The stores are decorated with handsome signs in black and gilt and red and green, and within are displayed various foreign and native wares—tin ware, made of old kerosene cans, native tobacco in whole leaves or cut very fine, pipes, medicines, rice, tea, cotton cloth, silk, pottery, china and a hundred other things. The tea houses are crowded with men, usually laughing and talking, but sometimes disputing and quarrelling.

Inside the city gates the shops are not so good, nor is the street so crowded. Over the gate is a temple to the god of war, and a little further on an "Eastern Hell Temple." In this are to be seen in figures one or two feet high all the sufferings of the Buddhist hell, or perhaps we should rather call it purgatory, as, after passing through the ten halls, or as many of them as they deserve, the souls are expected to drink some tea with Lethian properties, and then come back to the upper world. Most of the torments Dante saw, and some he did not see, are to be found there. Besides these two larger temples we pass twelve smaller temples to local divinities between the

compound and the chapel. These are eight or ten feet high and from four to ten feet square, and always contain two very respectable looking old people—a man and a woman—usually dressed in gilt but sometimes in blue, and often attended by two servants. I have never gone to the chapel in the evening without seeing candles and incense burning before some of these shrines.

The rest of the walk to the chapel is through a fashionable residence street, where some of the richest people in Ichang live. The line of blank wall which indicates large houses is broken by a blacksmith's shop, a paint shop and several other not very attractive looking stores — including two or three opium dens — which

would not be found on such a street in an American city. There are also certain stalls of sweetmeat sellers and fortune tellers.

The people of Ichang seem to be more religious than those of the cities lower down in the plain. Besides the little shrines to local divinities mentioned above, there are many larger temples, some in the city and more in the country, some in the valleys and more on the hills, and some on the tops of the most precipitous peaks. The trade in incense and candles is large.

All this religion has not produced a great amount of organized benevolence.

There are two or three benevolent guilds, but their works are small. One distributes considerable free rice to the poor and another dispenses some medicines. There are no free schools, no hospitals, and of course no attempt at caring for the deaf, the blind or the insane. The people seem slower than the people of Hankow; they stare at the foreigner more stupidly, and are slower at taking in an idea. Opium smoking is more

common, too. This is to be accounted for partly by the large population of Szechuan boatmen and partly by the fact that opium is cheaper here, since most of it comes down from Szechuan and a little has been raised in this vicinity during the last few years. Our day-school teacher



"WE PASS TWELVE SMALLER TEMPLES TO LOCAL DIVINITIES"

from Shasi, to whom I was trying to give a little instruction in geography during his last vacation, characterized the people of the province by saying that those in the eastern part were more false and deceitful and those in the west more fierce and brutal. However, they are not all bad.

Another feature of the place is the beggars. Relatively to the size of the city, they are more numerous here than in any town I know. This may be partly due to the poverty of the surrounding country, but I think much more to the prevalence of opium smoking. And

such miserable folk! Last winter there were two or three who progressed along the street not by walking (I am not sure whether they could walk or not) but by rolling along in the mud and filth. Others sit beside the street and pound their heads on the stone paving, calling on the passers by to give them money. "Oh, good people"—whack

—"I am blind"—whack—"Lay up merit"—whack—and so on all day long. Others adopt the more commonplace method of standing in the shop or house doors shivering and calling for alms until the benevolent shopkeeper gives them a few *cash* to get rid of them. But whatever their method, they are all about equally filthy and wretched and degraded. Any money they can get will probably go for opium. The worst toughs in our American cities seem comparatively hopeful.

We have wandered a long way from the chapel. It faces this fashionable street—though not the best part of it—and the back door opens on the city wall where it overlooks the river. On entering, we turn to the left into the guest-room. From the guest-room we go into the church, a very pretty Gothico-Chinese structure. The altar rail.



"THE REST OF THE WALK TO THE CHAPEL IS THROUGH A FASHIONABLE RESIDENCE STREET"

lectern and front of carved limestone are particularly fine. With the gallery over the guest-room it can be arranged to seat over two hundred, and it is so built that when we need to enlarge we can tear down the partition and throw the guest-room into the church, increasing the seating capacity by sixty or seventy. If on entering we do not

turn to the left we go through a small court into the boys' schoolroom. Beyond this is Mr. Tsen's guest-room, which is also the women's guest-room. To the right is the kitchen and to the left the girls' school. Upstairs are Mr. Tsen's study and bedrooms and behind is the city wall.

Our work was started fourteen years ago, and while progress has never been rapid, it has been fairly steady. We now own property adequate to our present needs, but allowing very little room for growth. If the increase next year is as great as it has been this year we shall be decidedly crowded.

Recently we decided to open a girls' school, and were fortunate enough to secure the services of an old pupil of Mrs. Graves's as teacher. We have fifteen girls studying daily, learning to

read and learning some Christian truth. The teaching is not all we could wish, but it is a vast improvement on no teaching at all. I know of no women in the Ichang church who could read before they entered the church.

Last year there were eighteen boys in the boys' school and I found them very well taught. They study Chinese—still largely on the old *memorize-but-do-not-try-to-understand* system, but with improvements — arithmetic, geography, English—the older boys only—and Christian doctrine. We found that by employing one of the older boys as a

desks would not, I fear, meet with the approval of any school committee in the United States. They are flat, and not very well made, and the benches have no backs, but they have some relation to the size of the pupil, they enable the teacher to tell whether he is in his place or not, and they make it possible to insist that each one keep his place moderately neat.

These schools must in the future, even more than in the past, be the feeders for our higher schools. There are now four Ichang boys in St. John's College, and four in Boone School. The girls'



THE CHANCEL OF THE ICHANG CHURCH

pupil-teacher we could increase the number to forty without making the work too hard. We have a number on the waiting list, and next year hope to increase still further. The school fees pay nearly half the expenses, and I think in a few years we can make it self-supporting.

We have tried a little experiment in desks and benches. In the ordinary Chinese school there are long desks and benches, all of about the same size, and that rather high for grown people. The little ones sit there with their heads just over the top of the desk, and their feet a foot or more from the floor. Discipline is not very strict and you could never tell just where a boy was if he had not a desk of his own to sit at. Our new

school is new, so that there are no graduates from it in other schools, because there are no graduates.

Every Wednesday evening there is a meeting of from thirty to forty-five men in the guest-room. A few verses from the Bible are given out as a subject and two men are appointed as leaders. Mr. Tsen opens the meeting with some of the Prayer Book collects. Then the chapter in which the text occurs is read, each taking a verse. A little over half the men take part in this, and some others who are not sure enough of the characters to read aloud follow in their Bibles. Then the two leaders expound the passage and anyone else who has a word of exhortation is given a chance

to speak. The meeting then closes with prayer. The men stay for a little while and I make attempts at conversation, but they mostly answer in monosyllables. The Ichang people are harder to talk to than any other people I know. On Friday evenings there are meetings for catechumens, and on other evenings a few come to learn to read.

There is a decided movement toward Christianity in the city at present, coming, doubtless, from a variety of causes, among which the somewhat ambiguous reform edicts recently issued deserve a prominent place. I fear the movement is not of a purely religious nature. Whatever the cause, it is our opportunity. We are very careful whom we baptize—enquirers must study for at least six months before they are admitted catechumens, and then for a year more before they are baptized; but we are glad to teach all who come. The number of men attending service has increased from



THE OLD STYLE BOYS' SCHOOL
The teacher, Mr. Liu, is at the left

about thirty to over sixty during the last six months, and we have found it necessary to put the school-boys in the gallery. On the women's side of the church, I am sorry to say, the attendance has remained almost stationary, except for the addition of the girls' school. From ten to twenty-five women appear, according to the weather. We have no Bible-woman, nor any immediate prospect of getting one, though we may be able to manage it in a year or two.

What do we want for Ichang? We want to develop the schools. For that we need more room. We can move the boys' school out to this compound, but that would not be very convenient. The properties on either side of us should sell for about \$1,000 (the original price of our present property), but one of our neighbors who wants to sell is so impressed with the wealth of the foreigner that he asks about \$2,800. We can wait.



THE GIRLS' SCHOOL



THE BOYS' SCHOOL

But wherever the schools are, we want as good primary schools as there are anywhere in China. We do not want a high-school for some time to come. We can leave that work for Wuchang and Shanghai.

We want to develop the women's work. As I said, there has been almost no increase in the attendance of women on the services, and those who come are lamentably ignorant. Foot-binding is also practically universal, so that the intellectual cramping of the head and the physical cramping of the feet hold the women in continual bondage. We need some foreign ladies to help break the chains.

We want an energetic, self-supporting, self-propagating church. The congregations have increased, which is certainly some sign of a missionary spirit on the part of the converts. Owing to this increase in the congregations and the introduction of a system of pledges the offerings have increased nearly three-fold during the last six months; but even so, we are only giving about ten per cent. of the ordinary running expenses.

We want to evangelize the surrounding country. Along the Yang-tse, between here and Shasi, the Swedish mission and the Scotch mission have some work, but there are still many places where there are no missions in which it may be advisable for us to open work. To the north and south and west the country is more mountainous and less thickly peopled, but still there are a great

many people there to whom we are sent to preach the Gospel. West up the Yang-tse for about a hundred and fifty miles, north and south for a much greater distance the country is absolutely unworked save for three or four Roman Catholic stations.

The Rev. Mr. Tsen, Priest



THE CHINESE HELPERS AT ICHANG

Mr. Tsen, the Catechist

Mr. Liu, the Teacher

In this region there are no large cities, but there are a great many towns and countless villages. It is a territory of about twenty thousand square miles, and certainly not under a million inhabitants. No other Christian body is doing anything for this part of the country and it is time that the Church did something. For the glory of God and the salvation of souls, let us enter in and possess the land. For this we want more men.

The Rev. D. T. Huntington is a graduate of Yale University and of the Berkeley Divinity school. He volunteered for service in China in 1895, but was informed by the Board of Managers that it was impossible to send him to the field, owing to lack of funds. The members of the Church Students' Missionary Association thereupon guaranteed Mr. Huntington's support, and he reached China in September, 1895. He went at once to Hankow, and, after having qualified himself by faithful work, was placed in charge of St. John's congregation. It was largely through his efforts and under his direction that the new St. John's, Hankow, was built. On his return to China in 1901 from his first furlough in the United States, Mr. Huntington was sent to take charge of the vacant station at Ichang.